

12-3-1991

Technical Minds Can Look to UD Program to Help Develop Management Skills

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls

Recommended Citation

"Technical Minds Can Look to UD Program to Help Develop Management Skills" (1991). *News Releases*. 7368.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/7368

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marketing and Communications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in News Releases by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.



The University of Dayton

News Release

Dec. 3, 1991
Contact: Pam Huber

TECHNICAL MINDS CAN LOOK TO UD PROGRAM TO HELP DEVELOP MANAGEMENT SKILLS

DAYTON, Ohio -- What could members of Alcoholics Anonymous and participants in a University of Dayton management training program have in common?

Both rely on peer support, say Thomas Ferratt and Ritu Agarwal, professors of management information systems at UD who have come up with a program to help technical-minded supervisors become better managers of people.

Their approach outlines the value of peer support, often a powerful part of self-help programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, in a training program for information systems (IS) supervisors.

"We were interested in designing a program that would help supervisors of IS professionals, such as computer programmers and systems analysts, manage people better," said Agarwal. "IS supervisors often have enough technical skills, but lack formal training in managing people."

They created a 13-week self-development program that guides participating supervisors through weekly readings, case analyses and action diaries and plans.

"In our study of the results of the program, we wanted to compare independent and peer learning," said Ferratt. "We hoped to investigate whether people who go through the program paired with a partner would learn more than those who studied alone."

The program was tested in "Managing of Information Systems Professionals," an elective class offered at UD in January 1990 to MBA students and MIS undergraduates. Students had to be supervisors of IS people, and six signed up.

-more-

OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

300 College Park Dayton, Ohio 45469-1679 (513) 229-3241 FAX: (513) 229-3063

Management training: Page 2

Given the choice of working in pairs or alone, all six decided to complete the program individually. Results showed that those with the least-developed management skills improved and "the participants gave very positive feedback," said Agarwal.

The professors are now looking to try the program in industry where they hope to find managers willing to work in pairs. Concerns are that the program is 13 weeks long and that supervisors might not be willing to help one another.

"Some literature suggests that some managers are very independent and would dislike peer support activities," Ferratt said. "Also, IS people in particular often have low social needs. Peer support may not motivate them."

Despite these concerns, Ferratt and Agarwal think that their program is more valuable than the two traditional training approaches: on-the-job training that saves money but might include little guided learning, and one-time-only intensive seminars that can be expensive and have few measurable results that last on the job.

"Our program builds on the advantages of the other two approaches while doing away with the disadvantages," said Agarwal. "We think it's an innovative way to train managers."

The management program evolved from a research proposal written by Ferratt and Agarwal called "An Experimental Investigation of the Effects of Peer Support in a Guided Self-Development Program for Managers." It won the award for best research proposal of 1990 in the Academy of Management's management education and development division.

-30-

For media interviews, contact **Thomas Ferratt** at (513) 229-2728 or **Ritu Agarwal** at (513) 229-2249.